

"ROOKIES" IN CONGRESS TRAVEL A ROCKY ROAD

Learning the Game in Washington Brings Sad Disillusionment to 122 "Baby" Members Starting Out to Save the Country and Win Undying Fame

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THERE are 122 "baby" members of the House of Representatives of the Sixty-seventh Congress—fellows who came to Washington to save the nation and reform it. They are just learning there's a difference between Pennsylvania avenue and Main street back home; that a possibly justifiable strut along the latter thoroughfare becomes merely a laughter-producing goosestep here in Washington.

The national capital has been accustomed to new Congressmen since the seat of Government was established. Except in dress the type has changed but little through the years—and certain of the rookie members to-day dress in the long coats and wide hats of the statesmen of a generation ago. What does a new member of Congress do? How does he act? How does he feel? What influence, if any, does he have and what of his disillusionment?

It's rather a sorrowful story, my countrymen, and there'll be no denial of it if these "baby members" really take a true inventory of themselves and their feelings as this session gets fully under way.

New Members on Arrival Expect to Be Interviewed

Some years ago a new member of Congress came to Washington from one of the Western States. For the purposes of this story his name will be Representative Junius P. Bunnymede. The home town band had accompanied him to the depot when he started for Washington and statesmanship. Admiring constituents gave him assignments and missions to perform. Washington would take notice when this chap arrived, they opined. They foresaw one side of Pennsylvania avenue tipping up as he walked down the other side.

Arriving at the capital, Mr. Bunnymede proceeded promptly to a hotel. He had observed that from time to time members of Congress were interviewed in the newspapers, and he was almost bursting to say something on the issues of the day. Quickly he consulted a telephone directory and called up the managing editor of one of the Washington newspapers.

Now it so happened that this editor was a hard boiled sort of man. Incidentally, his father many years before had been a member of Congress, and he knew both the newspaper and legislative games. Substantially this conversation ensued:

"Is this the editor? It is? Well, I am Congressman Junius P. Bunnymede of —, I have just arrived and am now at my hotel. I will submit to an interview if you will send one of your reporters or correspondents over to my room."

"I guess you are one of these new members of Congress," suggested the managing editor. Mr. Bunnymede admitted it.

"Well, lemme tell you something," replied the editor. "You stay around this town a little while and you'll probably come to the conclusion that you amount to about as much as a hitching post. Let me know when you wake up."

Representative Bunnymede was never interviewed except for local consumption back home. His constituents retired him at the end of two years because he had put through none of the reforms he had promised.

Probably the new member of Congress isn't as unimportant as this editor pictured him in that telephone conversation, but the overdrawn presentment is a fair index of the ultimate disillusionment of the average new member.

Each lot of "rookie" legislators is about as green as the preceding. Experiences are substantially the same: heartaches about the same, and shattered ambitions likewise. The new member goes up against a game here about which he knows little or nothing. It is different from ward politics and his encounters in State, county and municipal affairs. The veterans are in the saddle; they know and frame the rules of legislative procedure; they dislike a youngster who demands a hand in things, and they try to teach him his place if he does not subscribe, at least for a reasonable time, to the theory that new members should be seen and not heard.

Most New Members Begin by Antagonizing Their Predecessors

Almost every new member has defeated some old timer. He has done this by promising things, by exposing the failings of his antagonist, and by contending that the old legislative horse is worn out and new blood is required in the interest of that particular district.

Taking further liberties with the name of Representative Junius P. Bunnymede, let one follow the footsteps of the average new member.

He leaves home with the plaudits of the multitude and the echoes of a farewell banquet, causing his ears to tingle. Prominent citizens pat him on the back and predict that at least the nation will have some one to point the way out of its difficulties. Waving good-bay at the home town station and the porter makes something of a fuss over him. He accepts such attentions and suppresses his must get used to them.

In his pocket Representative Bunnymede carries a memorandum book in which he has jotted down things to be accomplished. Sam Smiley has never had a Federal pension; it should have been attended to long ago. The local butcher wants the beef trust

regulated, and he'll offer a bill and see that it is regulated soon after he gets to Washington. Jed Hawkins, out on Hickory Hollow road, claims the farmers are required to pay too much interest on their loans. Congressman Bunnymede will have the Federal Reserve Board attend to that little detail.

Another memorandum reminds that the Federal Government has been too stingy in its appropriations for good roads. The county commissioners want more funds, and Congressman Bunnymede agrees that he will have to put in a bill for that. Swamp



Creek also needs dredging to make it a navigable stream. He'll have that item included in the rivers and harbors bill. His predecessor had shamefully neglected the district in such matters. There are other memoranda about big and little things, and with some impatience Congressman Bunnymede observes that the train is making slow time to Washington.

Back in the smoking car the new member eventually confides to a group of drummers, tourists and others that he is a member-elect of Congress. He is drawn into a conversation about great issues and problems, but stipulates, you understand, that he is not talking for quotation and he hopes no traveller will tell the newspapers of his views. They promise.

Sight of Washington Statue Thrills Him to the Marrow

As he nears Washington Congressman Bunnymede spies the Washington Monument. It is his first sight of it and it sends a thrill down his spine. Great statesman, Washington. But, he soliloquizes, there are big issues to be determined by the statesmen of this day and the capital is still the city of opportunity.

At the Union Station no one in its magnificent concourse recognizes the new member. No "red cap" seems to pay him special attention. Perhaps his photograph hasn't yet been published up this way. Anyway, he calls a taxicab, orders that he be taken to the best hotel and remarks to himself, "So this is Washington." Congressman Bunnymede intends to stay only a day or so at the hotel. After that he'll hunt a boarding house or a cheaper hostelry, at any rate.

The hotel clerk barely lifts an eyelid when informed that Congressman Bunnymede is registering. The clerk is used to country Congressmen. He appears to be paying more attention to some one who turns out to be a New York banker.

Mr. Bunnymede sleeps at the hotel, but takes his breakfast next morning at the lunch room across the street. It is more "homelike," he explains to himself. Scanning the morning papers he discovers not a line reporting his arrival. However, there is an interview with the majority leader of the House who also arrived the day before; also certain comment from the Speaker, and an analysis of the election results by the leader of the minority party in the House. He turns to the boarding house advertisements and notes also the "family hotels" column. He decides possibly he may rent an apartment before the season is over.

That day Congressman Bunnymede spends in quest of a boarding house. Nowhere does he find awe and adulation when he mentions to the landlady that he is a member of Congress. He is jolted by the fact that he seems to be taken as a matter of course. However, he has a suspicion that the board rate is raised because he happens to be in public life and presumably able to pay all the traffic will bear. Mr. Bunnymede decides that he will change his tactics.

At the next boarding house visited he appears incognito, seeking a direct test of the difference in price charged a plain citizen and a star boarder like a Congressman.

"What is your business?" demands a keen eyed landlady. Congressman Bunnymede informs her that that is not important; he wants the best room in the house, and what does she want for it?"

"I'm running a respectable place here," says the landlady, "and I take in no strangers or folks who won't say what they do."

"His possibly justifiable strut along Main street becomes a ridiculous goosestep along Pennsylvania avenue soon after his arrival."



When the party caucus convenes Congressman Bunnymede finds that the programme has been arranged in advance. He seeks to obtain recognition and is informed that Congressman Somebody Else has the floor. A friendly member with at least two years' experience warns him not to raise a fuss. Mr. Bunnymede observes that a "steam roller" appears to be running and promises to address himself to that subject later.

Sitting about in the House for a few days, the new member notes that approximately a dozen men seem to do all the talking. He is informed that they are "leaders" and "near

leaders." Certain of them, he is informed, have been in the House for twenty years or more.

After more of this—and meanwhile Congressman Bunnymede is feeling less and less important and more and more homesick for the applause of the folks in his district—the new member summons courage and with a lump in his throat addresses the chair:

"For what purpose does the gentleman rise?" asks the presiding officer.

"To make a speech," says Congressman Bunnymede.

"The gentleman cannot be recognized for

enough to pretend to be interested.

When the newcomer, wearying of efforts to gain time enough to make a real speech, proposes to "extend his remarks in the Record" he is informed that some obstreperous member of the House has determined to save white paper and ink and prevent the extension of "canned speeches." He makes the request, anyway, and is refused unanimous consent.

After the days go by and the new member does get his chance to talk he faces about 29 or 30 of the 435 members of the House. The galleries are practically empty. His associates give him perfunctory applause to encourage him. His voice sounds hollow; his platitudes lack the punch of rehearsals; his gestures and antics such as swayed juries back in the courtroom at home are absolutely without effect, and his face flushes with embarrassment and a sense of failure. He takes his seat with the inner consciousness that he has failed to make good—and perhaps he may not be heard from again in months.

And what becomes of the reforms promised by Congressman Bunnymede, and the bills he announced he would put through? His measure for the pensioning of Sam Smiley went into the hopper with thousands of similar measures. Then it went to a committee pigeon hole. Sam died before his claim was ever reached. The proposal of an appropriation for Swamp Creek went out on a point of order. The bill to curb the "beef trust" was sent to a committee where it slept for the term. Furthermore, he was informed that should there be such legislation it would bear the name of the chairman of the committee.

Every way that Bunnymede turned he butted against precedents, points of order, parliamentary sharks and House rules. He became convinced there was a conspiracy against him; that the friends of his defeated predecessor were deliberately hazing him.

The House Is Not Hostile, But Precedent Rules There

But this was not true. The new member simply had encountered the same thing that hundreds before him had encountered—a system where veterans control both because of experience and influence gained after years of endeavor. Each dominant figure in the House at one time had been a Bunnymede. Each, with few exceptions, had taken his medicine and fought his way up, overcoming disappointments and disillusionments that stretched from the Union Station to the floor of Congress, via hotels, boarding houses and Washington streets where no one so much as turned a head to see a new member of Congress.

Day by day, however, Bunnymede brooded in his seat. He had influence back home, he reflected, and apparently none in Washington. Speeches that brought huzzahs on the country hustings brought only yawns in the Washington. Committee chairmen were evasive when he inquired about his pet bills and resolutions. The newspapers did not mention even that he had addressed the House. He was treated with tolerance and even courtesy by his colleagues—but he was getting nowhere. Bunnymede knew it in his own heart; he felt sure also that his constituents were finding it out.

After a while the new member went to one of the veteran Representatives and poured out his tale of woe. The old timer had been there for twenty-odd years. He put his hand on Bunnymede's shoulder and said:

"Listen, son. Most all of us have been through that. You've either got the stuff in you or you haven't. Get somebody to yield you twenty or thirty minutes time some day—a sufficient length of time to let yourself out—and go out there and make the best speech you can. Tell 'em you're

New Representatives Cause No Stir in Boarding Houses, Let Alone in Halls of Legislature, but Way to Success Is Open to Men of the Right Sort

that purpose now," the chair informs. "The time is in control of the gentleman in charge of the bill."

The "gentleman in charge of the bill" tells the new member that all time has been allotted. Perhaps he can get five minutes in a few days on some other matter.

In the cloakrooms Congressman Bunnymede attempts to tell a funny story. There are a few grins, but most of them seem to have heard it before. He switches the conversation to his views on the tariff. His only auditors are a couple of "rookie" members like himself. One old member is kind

enough. If you don't, when you go back home tell your people that you're doing the best you can; that you are a new member—but if they'll keep you up here long enough to let the law of seniority and influence work you will get somewhere and so will they. Stop worrying and sit steady in the legislative boat. Good committee assignments and other things will come along."

Such advice as this has been given by old timers to scores of "baby" members. If they have sense enough to take it, and have inherent ability, they do get somewhere. If they have not, they drop back into private life.

No end of stories are told by the old House employees of the "bad breaks" made by new Congressmen, but this might well be expected when it is taken into consideration that politics reaches everywhere for its candidates.

"What's the Constitution between friends?" is the classic of two generations that originated with a green Congressman from Brooklyn. And "Big Tim" Sullivan's remark that he would "rather be a lamppost on Broadway" than keep his seat in Congress is another saying that often is recalled when his brief Washington career is discussed.

Breaking into society is a dangerous field for the average new Congressman if his women folk are overly insistent about going everywhere and meeting everybody. Probably no city in the Union has more closely drawn caste lines than has Washington, and much heartburning awaits the overambitious social climber, even if his office is on Capitol Hill.

Many a man, despite every effort by wife and daughters, has been battered back from Washington's sacred society portals. And this in spite of great concessions on his part in aiding pet measures of the human ladder by means of which he sought to climb upward socially.

Of course there are numerous functions during the season that all members of Congress attend, but access to the real inner circle is given to only a few.

A Few Successful Men Who Were Once Congress "Babies"

William Tyler Page, now clerk of the House of Representatives, has been around that body in some capacity or another for thirty-nine years. He recalls practically no new member who established a real reputation in his first term. The late Charles Littlefield of Maine was one exception Mr. Page remembers. Littlefield was an orator of unusual ability and charm, a great student of the law and a forceful debater. Early in his career he ran afoul of organized labor, and that helped to make his reputation.

William B. McKinley, later President of the United States, was a quiet and unassuming member during his first term. He did not then reveal the elements of greatness. William Jennings Bryan made a speech in the House on the free silver issue that Page remembers as quite similar to the one he delivered when he was nominated for President. His utterances as a new member of Congress brought him little attention; later substantially the same speech swept a convention and made him standard bearer of his party, an honor accorded him twice afterward.

The late Speaker Champ Clark was just the ordinary, average new member when he first came to Congress more than a quarter of a century ago. There was nothing in his makeup then revealed that promised dominance on the floor in later years.

"Uncle Joe" Cannon sat about and reflected upon the lack of influence and the dispensability of the new member when he came here nearly a half century ago. Thomas B. Reed's logic, humor and political astuteness developed after his first term.

Frederick H. Gillett, the present Speaker, has served twenty-eight years in the House. His standing was gradually attained. He was in Washington for years before he started on the way to the chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee and the Speakership.

On the other hand, Representative James R. Mann of Illinois, the watchdog of the present and many preceding Congresses, displayed in his first term traits that he still exhibits. Mr. Mann is essentially a student of legislation. No "Joker" escapes him; no bill is introduced that he does not analyze word for word before it comes up for debate. He demonstrated that ability in his first term, and they soon began to listen to him. He is still a watchdog and a parliamentary expert.

Pupils Bombard Mentor With Many Naive Questions

Mr. Page recently conducted a one night "school" for the instruction of new members. Indicative of the fears and difficulties of the average new member were certain of the questions the experienced House clerk was requested to answer. They included:

How may a new member be recognized to make a speech? Can he get his bill out of committee? Are we expected to sit still during our first terms? Will it help us to learn the House rules? Is it possible for a new member to get the committee assignments he desires?

Showing the inexperience of at least one new member, Mr. Page was asked if the House office building, where members have their offices, "stayed open all the year 'round" and "can I bring a wardrobe trunk into my office?" Both questions received an affirmative reply.

There are 122 new ones this session, as was said in the beginning. The next political landslide will bring a hundred or so other legislative "rookies," but the story of Congressman Bunnymede will continue to apply to most of them so long as Congress endures.

Biographical Light On Present Congress

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LAWYERS, farmers, educators and newspaper men predominate in the present House of Representatives, and of these the lawyers far outnumber all other classes. An analysis of the biographical section of the new *Congressional Directory*, made from the advance proofsheets, shows that considerably more than half of the 435 members of the House in the Sixty-seventh Congress are lawyers.

Nearly 10 per cent. of the Representatives do not tell in their biographies what was their business or profession before they were put on Uncle Sam's payroll at \$7,500 a year as national legislators.

The professions or vocations of the 90 per cent. of the membership which takes the public into its confidence in this regard are shown by the following analysis:

Lawyers	259
Farmers	16
Educators	13
Newspaper publishers, editors and writers	13
Manufacturers	11
Merchants	8
General business	7
Real estate dealers	7
Bankers	6
Politicians, or public career (no other vocation mentioned)	5
Physicians	4
Insurance	3
Contractors and builders	3
Printers	2
Dentists	2
Mining engineers	2

It is also curious that 110 members of the present House, which was elected last November and met for the first time when the extra session of Congress began on April 11, are too coy to tell their ages. A computation based upon the birth dates given by the remaining 325 discloses that the average age of the House members is 49-2-5 years.

None comes nearer than six years to the Constitutional minimum requirement of 25 years. Representative Vincent M. Brennan of Detroit, Mich., is 31 years old, having been born on April 23, 1890. Representative Thomas J. Ryan of New York city is also 31. These are the two youngest members. Mr. Ryan does not give the day of his birth, but merely mentions the year, 1890. It is

rumored, however, that Mr. Ryan is several weeks the younger.

The Constitution naturally does not place any maximum limit on the age of House members. "Uncle Joe" Cannon, who was a friend of Abraham Lincoln, who was twice Speaker of the House, and who has the longest record of service in that body, far outdistances every other sitting member in age. He is in his 86th year. Two members are 80 years old, two are 73, and then their ages gradually fall until the largest number—twenty-seven—is found at the age of 51 years.

There is one each of the following: A clergyman, rancher, flour miller, lumber dealer, railroad locomotive engineer, proprietor of a forwarding and trucking business, labor organizer, iron moulder, restaurant proprietor, and manager of public utilities.

There is a great diversity in the character and literary style of the biographies printed in the *Congressional Directory*. They are in every instance really autobiographies, although some members would have you believe that they got somebody else, usually their secretaries, to prepare them. It is a safe bet, however, that none is printed without being carefully revised by the member.

Not a few are laudatory accounts, several hundred words long, of the previous career of the subject, but many are confined to brief statements of the date of birth—unless the member wants to keep that a secret—and the Congresses in which he has served.

In the last Congress the shortest "biography" was the following: "John W. Rainey, Chicago."

In the new *Directory*, just off the press, Mr. Rainey gives evidence of still further modesty. His "biography" reads: "John W. Rainey."

The next shortest in the new *Directory* is this: "James P. Buchanan, Democrat, Benham, Tex."

"Uncle Joe" Cannon, who can boast of the longest record in public life, both in and out of Congress, of any House member, has one of the shortest biographies. It contains about 100 words.

Miss Alice Mary Robertson, new Republican member from Muskogee, Okla., shames the 110 men who do not disclose their ages by announcing in a very short biography that she was born on January 2, 1854. She is the only member who prints the platform on which she was elected. Here it is in full: "I am a Christian; I am an American; I am a Republican."

Representative Manuel Herrick of Perry, Okla., uses the *Directory* to advertise the products of his farm. He remarks that he is a farmer and cattle raiser, "specializing in Herrick's Giant Yellow Corn and Copper-faced Hereford Cattle."